consideration in proportion to what was his while he was alive and 775
amongst his neighbors of his own village. This belief causes them to show great reverence for those of their number who have died.

Despite the a'hóts' inclination for wandering about, they yet ever remain in the vicinity of the place where the bodies to which they belonged died.

The soul of a person who dies in a foreign place and who has not been given burial in his home territory, is condemned to wander alone, despised and sad in the midst of the souls of strangers.

I asked my guide why it was that fortune was so cruel with 766
those wretches who, through no fault of their own, died and left their bodies far from their native place; to which he answered: "The mere fact of these bodies having been left abandoned in a far off place by their companions and by the sons of the same tribe, was a sign that while they were alive they had not enjoyed the love and esteem of the others. The foreign a'hóts on seeing the soul of an outsider make an appearance amongst them reason in this way: 'if the person to whom this soul belonged was not honored by his companions or by the sons of his own tribe, nor given burial befitting a brother, then he was neither loved nor esteemed by his own people.' This being so, then they also shun him and leave him alone." I only repeat the rascal's words.

This reminds me of the veneration which the peoples of all nations accord to their burial grounds, and, in this matter of the souls of the unburied being condemned to wander, these Indians have the same beliefs as the ancient Romans according to what Virgil so beautifully expresses in the Aenead.

These beliefs are the basis of the ceremonies to cure the sick and to bury the dead.

But before entering upon their description I must call atten- 821
tion to a sort of star cult, especially amongst the women. These 795
heavenly bodies are the moon and the morning star.

When the moon rises the women leave their huts and, holding hands, form a circle and begin to wheel rapidly, jumping and shouting in honor of the silvery moon.

They do the same thing when the morning star appears on the eastern horizon, and pray to it that the algarrobo pod crop and other wild fruits may be abundant.

[207] It follows that even when an individual has died outside his territory, his relatives and the members of his village will go and bring the corpse back to home ground for burial. But since transporting a corpse would be a very difficult matter for people who customarily get about on foot and who often have to travel hundreds of kilometers, they wait for such time to pass as will allow the corpse to lose its flesh, and then all they need to transport are the bones. This practice is in no way detrimental to the deceased for his soul cannot go under ground in any event until decomposition is finished. M 764

When death strikes, if it should be morning, then that very afternoon, and if it should be evening, then the very next morning, the corpse is placed in a grave. This grave is not filled in but is covered with branches so that the body may not supply a meal for jaguars, dogs or carrion eating birds. Once decomposition is over the remains are either burned, as has been said, or the grave is completely filled in and covered.

When a person dies far away from home, his body is wrapped in a net, in a squatting position, and then placed in a tree and covered so as to protect it from the above mentioned dangers; about a year later, or before if opportunity offers (but always when the bones are left) the relatives of the deceased return to pick up his remains and take them back to his hut where they are given the longed for burial. M 766

But wherever they may place the corpse they always put a pot full of water beside it. The reason for this is that just as soon as the individual dies the other departed ones gather round for a visit; and both they and he also might possibly become thirsty, and that is why he is given the wherewithal to slake their thirst. Anyone who knows the value which is placed on water in this region will understand why it seems important to the Indians to place some of this element at the disposal of the deceased, and will also be able to deduce that a bond of hospitality and fraternal feeling exists which continues even beyond the grave. Further more, our own pagan ancestors believed and practiced similar rites. M 764

As the Chaco Indians are poor and go about naked they can not take advantage of the occasion of the death of their loved ones to show themselves off in expensive black clothing, as the whites M C 765

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do, or in white garments as do the Chinese, but they show in their own way that they are in mourning by shaving their heads which are the only parts of their bodies with covering. The women, instead of parading themselves about in their somber garb in churches and public places, hide themselves away in their huts and avoid all contact with their neighbors; they refrain absolutely from talking and apply themselves more diligently to their household duties. They continue in this mourning for a year during which time it is not proper for them to remarry. Whenever they must needs go out they take the most secluded paths and if one should chance to meet them they cover their faces: they will not talk on any account and avoid any occasion for doing so. It happened that travelers [208] who have met up by chance in out-of-the-way and therefore suspect places, with women like these who are withdrawn and will not speak, have mistreated and even killed them, being ignorant of the custom.

In addition to shaving their heads they also wail -- a monotonous expressionless chant - which is apparently dictated by convention and accompanied by the beating of the "pin pin" which, as I believe I have already said, is a mortar hollowed out of a tree trunk with a tool or with fire. Water is poured into this mortar and then a skin is stretched tightly over it to form a sort of drum. They beat upon this skin with a gourd filled with grains of corn or algarrobo seeds.

They wail in unison at certain stipulated hours, but the widow or mother does so without ceasing, even when she walks through the streets about her business. Relatives and friends accompany the deceased to the grave, and if he be a well loved chief or some famous witch doctor then the whole tribe will go.

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Chiefs and particularly famous witch doctors occupy positions of honor among the a'hot who await them, and their influence in the spirit world will be in proportion to the esteem in which they were held by their neighbors of which the funeral rites will be a yardstick. And so when one of them dies the Indians who are gathered about his bier beg him to bend every effort in their favor when he is far off among the a'hot, and try to influence the storm a'hot and the plague a'hot or the famine a'hot to pardon their villages and visit their enemies. The dying

1: Pelleschi- 111 C-5 (ca 1875) 1896 S17 Mataco S17
Chaco Indians S84

man promises to do this and his companions by way of reward do him even greater honor at his funeral, thus augmenting the departed one's power for good in the spirit world. Do we not do likewise when we implore those who die in the odor of sanctity to intercede in heaven for us in our pilgrimage through this vale of tears?

Sorrow points up the basic similarity in all men, and the harmony of the human character in actions and speech, hopes and doubts, is never manifested more clearly than when confronted with a grave.

Chapter XI

Doctors

In the Chaco there are both male and female doctors, but very few medicines; treatment being purely empirical because of the ignorance and superstition of those Indians. [209]

It is strange that the wild inhabitants of the Chaco have not discovered remedies, but that is the way it is, in part because of their lack of intelligence but mostly because of the superstition which grips them in all matters respecting disease and sickness.

They firmly believe that sickness is caused by an a hot's getting into a person, and therefore all efforts are bent in the direction of getting rid of it by the only means possible, that is by conjuring it out.

It follows logically from this that their doctors cannot be other than witch doctors or priests or what have you. Apart from this their very superstition is a consequence of each person's need to free himself of a present evil and his ignorance as to how to bring this about. That generous measure of wit native to man does service as a middle road between ignorance and superstition.

Nevertheless they realize their lack of efficacious remedies and also the superiority of the whites in this matter, in whom they have great faith as healers; while the poorer and more

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 S17 Mataco S17
Toba S112

ness and misfortune. Thus the Choroti expressly declared to me that if at birth a child is very sickly or deformed, this is due to its being possessed by an evil *möhsek* (spirit), and they therefore generally kill the child at once. The Mataco call their evil spirits *aittáh* and regard a monster as an *aittáh* personified. Similarly the Tobas believe that a sick child is possessed by a demon (*peyók*), or is itself such a demon, and owing to the close connection which there is between the child and its parents, this may entail unfortunate consequences for the parents also, nay, for the whole tribe.

Father Cardús relates that when among the Tobas a woman dies in child-birth, the new-born child is buried alive with its mother's body [1]). I do not believe that such a custom is practised by the Tobas of to-day, but it may well have existed formerly. A woman who dies in childbirth is always regarded by the Indians with superstitious fear, since the accident is explained as an operation of evil spirits to which the woman has fallen a victim. But the new-born child with its mother forms, as it were, one single personality; consequently the child also is regarded as being possessed. Besides, a sucking child which is bereft of its mother is also left without nutrition since, according to Indian ideas, a new-born babe can only be nourished with the milk of its own mother, and would thus die in any case.

We may of course also assume that practical considerations have led the Indians to infanticide. The Indians understand that a sickly or deformed child has scarcely any chance of developing into a strong man and a useful member of society. In the hard struggle for existence under which the Indian lives it may even be merciful to destroy him. I believe however that such considerations play only a subordinate part in the custom of infanticide, which must first of all be explained by superstition.

The same custom prevails with regard to *twins*. Among all tribes the second is generally killed. The birth of twins is among all Pilcomayo tribes looked upon as an unnatural and most ominous thing, since the Indians consider that one man cannot become the father of two children at once. The second, consequently, must be the offspring either of another man or of an evil spirit. Besides, the Indians say that a woman has not sufficient milk to nourish two babes at the same time, and from this point of view also twins are regarded as unlucky. The Indian woman, who has to work hard, is anxious not to bear more children than she is able to nourish and to take care of. In a Choroti family three or four

[1]) Cardús *op. cit.* p. 263.

845 766 A child born dead is buried immediately without any ceremony. It is considered as waste matter just as is the placenta. On the other hand, if the child dies after having lived for a few hours it is buried according to the traditional funeral rites.

846 262 After the birth of their child both father and mother continue to take various precautions of a magical nature in order not to undermine the child's health. They abstain from certain foods, among others, from the flesh of the tatú [type of armadillo--Translator] and of the iguana All infractions of food "tabus" will cause the child to have stomach trouble. Certain "tabus" last from one to two years. 834 The husband abstains from all sexual intercourse with his wife until such time as the baby has teeth.

856 Some practices have, in the Indians' opinion, the magical power of influencing the child's growth. Thus, the parents may ask a woman who has beautiful hair to cut off a lock and rub their little daughter's head with it. A person whose limbs are very well shaped will be asked to massage the legs of a child In general, parents are pleased when well formed persons take their baby in arms to communicate their good looks.

857 A woman will feed only her own child and refuses to breast feed any other baby. Nevertheless one can see, on occasion, grandmothers giving the breast to a baby, but this is only to [11] pacify them and not to nourish them as some assert When the child is about a year old, his mother chews up grains of boiled corn and introduces [662] this paste, with her fingers, into the little one's mouth. In order to pacify their babies, whom my presence frightened, the mothers would keep feeding them continually Likewise when a child would make a fuss in church, its mother would start by patting it gently and saying "hush," hush, "hush" to it in order to calm it down, but if this measure did not bring about the necessary effect she would put it to breast.

855 I do not remember ever seeing a man or a woman mistreat a child The following episode, which I observed in a Mataco village, may be considered typical. A little child about two years old was screaming madly without apparent cause. His mother jumped him up and down on her knees in the hope of pacifying him; then she closed his mouth with her hand. As the little fellow continued to scream

6:Métraux E-5 (no date) 1943 SI7 Mataco SI7

and jerky contractions. A strong diarrhea is also a concomittant effect of the poisoning.

Those who have been saved by prompt medical treatment (injection or morphine) describe their symptoms as follows: At first they feel considerably depressed, then they grow more and more dizzy "as if the world were going head over heels". The dizzines increases until the victim is forced to lie down.

It is apparent from the cases cited here that suicide among the Matako does not always take a collective form, but it may frequently do so. Death by suicide appears to be a temptation to which individuals yield with amazing facility and which is often contagious.

Case Histories

The very day I arrived at the Mission of San Andrés on the Upper Pilcomayo I was made aware of the frequency of suicide by poisoning. A young Indian in the mission suddenly took sick. (He was suffering from malaria.) At the first sign of his illness, his family rushed to the missionary to tell him the young man had eaten sachasandia and to ask for prompt help.

Later there was a real alarm when a young woman actually did attempt to kill herself. The woman had a lover who lived in another village with his wife and two children. The man's grandmother (Mother's mother) feared that he might desert his family and took steps to prevent such a disgrace. For this reason she called on the missionary and urged him to interfere. The missionary talked to the girl's parents and learned from them that the girl's lover often stayed at their home. A few days before the young woman had gone to her lover's village and had snatched a knife and other goods from his house. When she returned to her home, she demanded a compensation before she would break off relations with the man. Afterwards she suddenly left home and went to call on distant relatives in whose house she went to sleep. When these people wanted to send her back, they were unable to wake her. An old woman noticed a faint smell of sachasandia on her breath and immediately sent for the missionary. The limbs of the patient were already twitching, her mouth rigid. After an injection of morphine she began to vomit and so recovered.

Second Case. At another mission a 16 year old orphan committed suicide. The girl had had several love affairs but had formed no stable tie with a man. Finally she ate sachasandia and, since no one came to her assistance, died in the middle of the village. A woman took the dead orphan's head on her lap and her distant relatives wailed the whole day and night. Afterwards, however, the body was left

6:Métraux E-5 (no date) 1943 SI7 Mataco SI7

naked on the plaza where the small children could throw stones at it and the hungry dogs could lick it. No one apparently wanted to touch the corpse and when the missionary ordered the Indians to bury it, they merely removed the remains to the bush but did not bother to dig a grave. The missionary attributed the people's indifference to the fact that the girl had no close relatives and that she was ill-tempered. According to the Indians, her bad disposition was also the cause of her unhappy love life.

Third case. A boy of 16 and his 14 year old wife often quarreled until, finally, the boy commited suicide. The girl at first appeared unconcerned but later joined in the death wailing. Soon afterwards she became depressed because some of the people held her responsible for her husband's death. Three days later she ate sachasandia fruit late in the afternoon expecting that the poison would take effect when she slept and when no one would detect her condition. She was discovered, however, and the missionary, who was called in great haste, was able to save her life. Although her parents reacted with concern, they seemed less disturbed than her parents in-law.

Fourth case. The cause for Teresa's attempted suicide was sexual frustration. This girl was about 13 years old and, since she had already menstruated, was considered to be an adult. She was extremely anxious to find a husband but all the young men were already married. Out of sheer desperation she set out for Espinillo, a village near her camp, hoping to attract the attention of the Argentine settlers there. Her relatives, however, prevented her from carrying out this project. As a result she became very despondent and finally ate sachasandia. When she felt the worst effects of the poison she became panic-stricken and went herself to the dispensary to get an emetic, which saved her life. Her widowed mother was deeply concerned and could not be persuaded that the girl would recover. During her daughter's illness, she often woke the girl from sleep, fearing that she might actually be dead.

Fifth case. Manuel, a boy of about 17, was married to an illtempered girl who at that time was pregnant by him. Tiring of her sharp tongue, he abandoned her and married another girl, Manuela. His first wife refused to resign herself to the new situation and continually quarreled with her former husband and his new wife. Her aggressiveness so depressed the couple that both decided to take poison to escape the vituperations of the incensed woman. In this case no one seemed particularly affected by the attempted suicide, perhaps because neither of the victims had living parents. It was a small child who warned the missionary in the middle of the night. The missionary